

five short stories, read for craft, not just plot



The five stories

A Living God

Lafcadio Hearn, a village headman sets fire to his own harvest to save the villagers from a coming wave

Advice to Youth

Mark Twain, a satirical mock lecture that says the opposite of what it appears to be advising

The Paper Menagerie

Ken Liu, a son's strained bond with his mother, carried through the origami animals she folds for him

The Great Automatic Grammatizator

Roald Dahl, an inventor builds a machine that can write fiction, and what that does to human writers

Thank You, Ma'am

Langston Hughes, a woman catches a boy who tried to steal her purse, and responds with unexpected kindness

Reading a short story before answering



- read once for the whole arc, who wants what, and what changes by the story's end
- note the narrator's stance, some of these five are told close to one character's mind, others step back
- a story's title is rarely accidental, ask what it points to before treating it as decoration
- mark the turning point, most short stories hinge on one moment where a character's choice or view shifts

